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ABSTRACT

As part of an effort to increase the recruitment of minority students in two-year colleges, a study was conducted to determine barriers and facilitators to minority student recruitment, focusing on African-American, Asian-American, Mexican-American, Puerto-Rican American, and American Indian students. Questionnaires were mailed to all 1,173 vice-presidents of student affairs listed in the 1994 edition of "Who's Who in Community Colleges," requesting them to agree or disagree with 19 barriers to minority student recruitment and to report usage of 22 recruitment strategies at their institution. The response rate was 54.6% (n=641), with the typical respondent being 48 years old, white, and male, and having a master's degree in education and 14 years administrative experience. The five most frequently agreed upon barriers and the percentages of agreement were: (1) low high school completion rates among minorities (54.3%); (2) the confusion of prospective minority students regarding the options and benefits of higher education (51.4%); (3) low expectations communicated by parents, teachers, and peers (50.8%); (4) the tendency of many minority youth to reject the assertion that success requires a college degree (48.9%); and (5) recruiting minority students is time consuming and labor intensive (48.4%). Top strategies cited by respondents included establishing a line of communication with guidance counselors in minority high schools (92.2%); college admissions staff visiting minority high schools (90.9%); articulating programs with minority high schools (77.9%); directing college scholarships toward minority students (75.1%); and scheduling admissions and financial aid seminars for minority youth (74.5%). (Contains 27 references.) (Four tables and the survey instrument are appended.) (KP)

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Effective Strategies for Enhancing Minority Student Recruitment in Two-Year Colleges

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Introduction

Minority students are projected to constitute one-third of our school-age population by the year 2000 (The Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, 1988). As minority students become a larger proportion of the pool of high school graduates, finding ways to increase their recruitment is becoming an increasingly important concern in higher education. Many minority students have chosen to enroll in two-year colleges, given their proximity, cost, and open-access nature. In a current study, two-year colleges were reported to enroll a disproportionately large share of all minority students enrolled in higher education. Fifty-five percent of all Hispanics, 52% of all American Indians, and 42% of all African Americans enrolled in higher education are attending two-year colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 1992).

Minority workers will also make up one-third of the net additions to the U.S. labor force between 1985 and 2000 (The Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, 1988). The extensive occupational and technical programs of two-year college make them strategically positioned within our system of higher education to help develop the skills and talents of many of these workers. Two-year colleges have also developed extensive programs to further develop the academic skills of many under prepared minority and low-income students so that they can progress towards baccalaureate and graduate and professional degrees. In order for minority students to take advantage of these academic, as well as occupational and vocational programs, two-year colleges need to identify what are the barriers to and facilitators of minority student recruitment. This study explores how to increase the recruitment of minority students in two-year colleges by examining these barriers and facilitators.

In particular, a number of research questions are addressed in this study using descriptive statistics, including:

- What is the demographic profile of vice-presidents of student affairs?
- What are the numbers and percentages of underrepresented minority students?
- What are the main barriers to minority student recruitment?
- What are the most frequently utilized strategies for recruitment minority students?

Review of the Literature

Federal data on the representation of minorities among two-year college students are readily available. In a recent survey, it was reported that African-American students represent 9.5%, Mexican-American students 5.0%, American Indians 1.8%, Asian-American students 2.6%, Puerto Rican-American students 2.2%, and other Latino students 2.7% of all first-time, full-time students enrolled in two-year colleges (Astin, Korn, & Riggs, 1993). The representation of some of these minority groups among first-time, full-time two-year college students is less than their proportional representation in the overall U.S. population within which African Americans make up 12.1%, Hispanics 9.0%, Asians 2.9%, and American Indians 1.8%. American Indian and Hispanic students are well represented among first-time, full-time two-year college students, while African American and Asian American students are under represented (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992).

This study provides current institutional data on the number and percentage of minorities among full-time and part-time two-year college students. Given the sizable percentage of students attending two-year colleges part-time, the inclusion of both full-time and part-time students in the data more accurately reflects the actual number of minority students enrolled in two-year colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 1992). Unlike previous studies in which data reported on minority two-year college students were gathered

indirectly from student surveys (Astin, et al., 1993), this study is based on information gathered directly from Vice Presidents of Student Affairs at two-year institutions.

A number of researchers have posited specific attitudinal and structural factors that hinder the recruitment of minority students in four-year institutions (Justiz, Wilson, & Bjork, 1994; Bents & Haugen, 1992; Brown, 1991; James, 1990; Applegate & Henninger, 1989; Corbett, 1989; Hawkins, 1989; Lewis, 1989; Olivas, 1986; Astin, 1982; Cheathem, 1982; Johnson, 1981). Relatively little study has been done examining barriers to the recruitment of minority students specifically at two-year institutions (Angel & Barrera, 1991; Gorski, 1991; Harris, 1990; Leach & Roberts, 1988; Urban Community Colleges Commission, 1988; Richardson & Bender, 1987). This study was designed to test empirically whether attitudinal and structural factors perceived as barriers to minority student recruitment at four-year colleges are perceived as barriers at two-year colleges as well.

Methods

The investigators focused on five different minority groups: African Americans, Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto-Rican Americans, and American Indians. Data on both part-time as well as full-time minority students were collected to more accurately represent the typical student course-taking pattern in two-year colleges.

The questionnaire utilized for this study included questions on respondents' demographic backgrounds, campus demographics, barriers to minority student recruitment, and recruitment strategies. Individual questions were constructed after a thorough review of the literature and research on minority student recruitment. To establish content validity, a draft of the questionnaire was distributed to student affairs administrators in two-year

colleges in West Texas. Based upon this field test, ambiguous questions were either rewritten or eliminated.

The unit of analysis was all vice-presidents of student affairs listed in the *Who's Who in Community Colleges 1994* (American Association of Community Colleges, 1994). The questionnaire was sent to the entire population of 1,173 vice-presidents of student affairs in two-year colleges. Given the major responsibility for student recruitment that this administrator typically has, it was assumed that this individual would be knowledgeable both about the number of minority students attending the college and about the college's minority student recruitment program.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study will be discussed in the sections that follow: characteristics of respondents, percentages of minority students, barriers to minority student recruitment, strategies for minority student recruitment, and predictors of the percentage of minority students.

Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 641 Vice-Presidents of Student Affairs responded to the survey, for a response rate of 54.6%. The typical Vice-President of Student Affairs that responded to the survey was a white male, 48 years of age, with a master's degree in education, and 14 years of administrative experience. The typical respondent indicated that they had some contact with minority students and faculty and extensive contact with minority administrators. The administrators indicated that slightly more than one-fifth of the population in their institution's service area was minority. Slightly less than two thirds (65.3%) of the respondents indicated that their college was making progress in recruiting minority students in the 1990s. This finding confirms data from a recent national report indicating that the number of minority students among the nation's college

students increased from 16.1% in 1980 to 19.2% in 1990 (U.S. Department of Education, 1992). The number of minority students participating in higher education is on the increase, and that fact is reflected in the progress in recruiting minority students that the majority of Vice Presidents of Student Affairs report.

Percentages of Minority Students

The respondents also provided information on the number of different minority groups enrolled at their institution. The number of students in a particular minority group was then divided by the total student credit enrollment at that institution to determine the percentage of the institution's total credit student enrollment belonging to particular minority groups. The average percentage of different minority groups in the sample were: African-American 8.5% (458), Mexican-American 4.3% (403), Puerto Rican-American .3% (21), American Indian 1.8% (54), and Asian-American 1.9% (209). The average percentage of minority students on a typical community college campus in this study was 16.9%, while the average service area minority population was 20.6%.

Barriers to Minority Student Recruitment

The survey respondents were asked to respond to 19 barriers to the recruitment of minority students (See Appendix A). For each barrier, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the recruitment barriers. Table 3 lists the five barriers to minority student recruitment receiving the highest levels of agreement. For the purposes of the table, the responses for "agree" and "strongly agree" were combined. More than half of the respondents agreed with the following recruitment barriers: the low high school completion rate of minorities; minority student confusion about the options and benefits of higher education; and low expectations communicated by parents, teachers, and peers. Slightly less than half of the respondents agreed with two other barriers: minority youth reject the assertion

that success requires a college degree; and recruiting minority students is time consuming and labor intensive.

Barriers to minority student recruitment can be categorized into either structural or attitudinal barriers. Attitudinal barriers are those prejudicial attitudes and subtle forms of discrimination which make it difficult to recruit and retain minority students. Structural barriers are those forces external to the institution, or specific institutional programs and practices, that impede the recruitment and retention of minority students (Opp, 1994). Both types of barriers to minority student recruitment can be found in the list of top barriers on Table 3. The structural barriers include the low completion rate of minority high school students, and the time consuming and labor intensive nature of recruiting minority students. The attitudinal barriers include minority student confusion about the options and benefits of higher education, the low expectations communicated to minority students by significant others, and the rejection by minority youth that success requires a college degree.

Strategies for Recruiting Minority Students

The respondents were also asked to indicate from a list of 22 recruitment strategies those that were used by their institution. Table 4 indicates the five most frequently utilized strategies for recruiting minority students. Two of the recruitment strategies are utilized by more than nine out of 10 respondents to this survey: establishing and maintaining a line of communication with guidance counselors in minority high schools, and having college admissions staff visit minority high schools. Three other recruitment strategies were used by approximately three quarters of the respondents: articulating programs with minority high schools; directing college scholarships toward minority students; and scheduling admissions and financial aid seminars on college campuses for minority youth. A common element in several of these strategies is the emphasis

on reaching out to minority students while they are still in high school. Having college admissions staff visit minority high schools and having minority students come to the campus to learn about admissions and financial aid promote the early involvement of the students with the college environment. The other frequently utilized recruitment strategies focus on improving the articulation process between high school and college for minority students. Working with high school guidance counselors, articulating programs with minority high schools, and providing college scholarships all facilitate the transfer of minority students from high school to college.

Conclusions

This study provided current information about the numbers and percentages of full-time and part-time minority students enrolled in two-year colleges. The researchers found that with the exception of American Indian students, all minority groups are underrepresented in two-year colleges when compared to their proportional representation in the overall U.S. population. Given their open access, community colleges have a vital role in the overall system of higher education in helping increase minority student participation in higher education. Community colleges administrators need to redouble their efforts to recruit minority students if our system of higher education is to achieve the goal of having proportional representation of all minority groups.

Vice Presidents of Student Affairs reported both attitudinal as well as structural barriers to the recruitment of minority students. Structural barriers included: the low high school completion rate of minorities, the time consuming and labor intensive nature of recruiting minority students, and the absence of a large minority student population on campus. Attitudinal barriers included: minority student confusion about the options and benefits of higher education; low expectations communicated by significant others; and minority youths'

rejection of the assertion that success requires a college degree. Recommendations for addressing these barriers vary depending on the type of barrier. The study found that the one significant barrier to minority recruitment is the absence of a large minority student population. Campuses might address this barrier by attempting to attract more minority students by targeting college scholarships at minority groups.

The recruitment of minority students continues to be an important issue for both two- and four-year colleges. Writers on higher education have identified equity as one of the fundamental purposes of all institutions of higher education (Astin, 1984). Community colleges, as open access institutions, play a crucial role in our country in ensuring that equity is promoted in our system of higher education. This research has attempted to document the need for continued efforts to increase the representation of minority students in two-year colleges. It is hoped that the results of this study can be used by two-year college administrators, faculty, and policy makers to eliminate the barriers to, and design more effective strategies for, the recruitment of minority students.

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Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Characteristic	Percentage	Mean
Sex		
Female	32.6	
Male	67.4	
Race		
White	72.9	
Minority	27.1	
Age		48.3 years
Years of Community College Administrative Experience		14.0 years
Highest Degree Earned		
MA	51.5	
Ed.D	21.9	
Ph.D.	18.4	
Other	8.2	
Department of Highest Degree		
Education	68.0	
Social Science	9.4	
Other	22.6	

Table 2

Percentage[a] of Minority Students at Two-Year Colleges

Minority group	Percentage	Average
African Americans	8.5	.458
American Indians	1.8	. 54
Asian Americans	1.9	209
Mexican Americans	4.3	403
Puerto Rican-Americans	.3	21
Total	16.9	

[a]Percentages were calculated by dividing the total credit student enrollment by the number of students belonging to particular minority groups.

Table 3

Most Frequently Agreed upon Barriers to Recruiting Minority Students

Recruitment Barrier	Percentage
The low high school completion rate of minorities here serves as a barrier to their recruitment	54.3
Prospective minority students here tend to be confused about the options and benefits of higher education	51.4
Low expectations communicated by parents, teachers, and peers make recruiting minority students difficult at this campus	50.8
Many minority youth in this community reject the assertion that success requires a college degree	48.9
Recruiting minority students here is time consuming and labor intensive	48.4

Table 4

Most Frequently Utilized Strategies for Recruiting Minority Students

Recruitment Strategy	Percentage
Establishing and maintaining a line of communication with guidance counselors in minority high schools	92.2
Having college admissions staff visit minority high schools	90.9
Articulating programs with minority high schools	77.9
Directing college scholarships toward minority students	75.1
Scheduling admissions and financial aid seminars on college campuses for minority youth	74.5

A National Survey of Recruitment Practices for Minority Students at Two-Year Colleges

Directions: Please answer each question by circling the appropriate number.

Example: This is a survey on minority student recruitment practices.

1 Yes 2 No

PART I: DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

1. Your sex:

   1 Male 2 Female

2. Racial/ethnic group (Circle *all* that apply):

   1 White/Caucasian
   2 Black/African-American
   3 American Indian
   4 Asian-American
   5 Mexican-American/Chicano
   6 Puerto Rican-American
   7 Other

3. How old will you be on December 31 of this year? _____

4. What is the highest degree that you have earned?

   1 Bachelor's
   2 Master's
   3 Ed. Specialist
   4 Ed.D.
   5 Ph.D.
   6 Other Degree

5. In what broad area is your highest degree?

   1 Agriculture
   2 Biological sciences
   3 Business
   4 Education
   5 Engineering
   6 English
   7 Health-related
   8 History/Pol. Sci.
   9 Humanities
   10 Fine Arts
   11 Mathematics/Statistics
   12 Physical sciences
   13 Social sciences
   14 Technical
   15 Other

6. Number of years of two-year college administrative experience: _____

How much contact do you have with each of the following groups:

1=Extensive *2=Some* *3=None at all*

7. Minority students	1	2	3
8. Minority faculty	1	2	3
9. Minority administrators	1	2	3

PART II: CAMPUS DEMOGRAPHICS

10. How many African-American students do you have? _____

11. How many Mexican-American students do you have? _____

12. How many Puerto Rican-American students do you have? _____

13. How many American Indian students do you have? _____

14. How many Asian-American students do you have? _____

15. What percentage of your service area's population is minority? _____

16. In recruiting minority students in the 1990s, this college is:

1 making progress 2 staying about the same 3 losing ground

PART III: BARRIERS TO RECRUITING MINORITY STUDENTS

Below are some statements about minority student recruitment. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following: (Circle **one** response for each item)

1=Agree Strongly 2=Agree Somewhat 3=Disagree Somewhat 4=Disagree Strongly 5=Not Applicable

17. Minority high school students receive good academic preparation for college in this community	1	2	3	4	5
18. The low high school completion rate of minorities here serves as a barrier to their recruitment	1	2	3	4	5
19. Minority high school students do not have opportunities for advanced college prep classes in this community	1	2	3	4	5
20. Minority high school students suffer from inadequate academic and career counseling in this community	1	2	3	4	5
21. The low intellectual self-concept of prospective minority students is a barrier to their recruitment	1	2	3	4	5
22. Inadequate financial aid on this campus makes it difficult to recruit minority students	1	2	3	4	5
23. Low expectations communicated by parents, teachers, and peers make recruiting minority students difficult at this campus	1	2	3	4	5
24. The absence of a large minority student population on this campus is a barrier to minority student recruitment	1	2	3	4	5
25. Prospective minority students here tend to be confused about the options and benefits of higher education	1	2	3	4	5

1=Agree Strongly *2=Agree Somewhat* *3=Disagree Somewhat* *4=Disagree Strongly* *5=Not Applicable*

26. Many minority youth in this community reject the assertion that success requires a college degree	1	2	3	4	5
27. Prospective minority students choose vocational-technical schools or the military over enrolling at this college	1	2	3	4	5
28. Prospective minority students are unwilling to assimilate with the culture of this campus and be repudiated by family and peers	1	2	3	4	5
29. There has been a movement away from affirmative action at this college	1	2	3	4	5
30. Affirmative action is a matter of financial survival for this college	1	2	3	4	5
31. Recruiting minority students here is time consuming and labor intensive	1	2	3	4	5
32. The recruitment of minorities is limited because this institution can not afford to invest more resources in support services	1	2	3	4	5
33. Faculty here lack true understanding and acceptance of minorities	1	2	3	4	5
34. Institutional racism here dissuades many minorities from seeking college admission	1	2	3	4	5
35. Political pressure from minority groups on and off campus facilitates the recruitment of minority students	1	2	3	4	5

PART IV: MINORITY STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Which of the following strategies for recruiting minority students has your institution used? (Circle **one** response for each item.)

1=Yes *2=No* *3=Not Applicable*

36. Articulating programs with minority high schools	1	2	3
37. Creating dual enrollment programs with minority high schools	1	2	3
38. Developing early intervention programs for minority students	1	2	3
39. Scheduling admissions and financial aid seminars on college campuses for minority youth	1	2	3
40. Having college admissions staff visit minority high schools	1	2	3
41. Working with minority schools in the design and strengthening of curricula	1	2	3

1=Yes *2=No* *3=Not Applicable*

42.	Establishing and maintaining a line of communication with guidance counselors in minority high schools	1	2	3
43.	Directing college scholarships toward minority students	1	2	3
44.	Getting local companies to help fund financial aid packages for disadvantaged minorities	1	2	3
45.	Having local business offer minority students summer jobs to help them save for college	1	2	3
46.	Focusing mass media advertising on minority audiences	1	2	3
47.	Sending out recruitment information in the native language of the student	1	2	3
48.	Using minority students, parents, and alumni to recruit minority students	1	2	3
49.	Working with minority student families to inform and educate them about the value of higher education	1	2	3
50.	Developing recruitment partnerships with local minority organizations	1	2	3
51.	Creating a minority affairs position to assist prospective minority students with admission, financial aid, and counseling	1	2	3
52.	Hiring minority admissions officers	1	2	3
53.	Rewarding departments for recruiting minority students	1	2	3
54.	Establishing an advisory committee to identify ways to expand contacts in the minority community	1	2	3
55.	Incorporating a plan to recruit minority students into the college's strategic plan	1	2	3
56.	Monitoring of progress in minority student recruitment by board and administration	1	2	3
57.	Having minorities serve on the board of trustees	1	2	3

Thank you for your assistance. Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed, postage-paid, pre-addressed envelope by **October 14, 1994** to:

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Box 45017
Lubbock, TX 79409-9989